

In re Patent Application of:
STORM ET AL.
Serial No. **10/820,464**
Filed: **APRIL 8, 2004**

REMARKS

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the thorough examination of the present application.

To address the drawing objection, paragraph 19 in the specification has been amended to include reference to transistor M6 as illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3. For consistency, paragraph 19 was further amended to include reference to transistors M4 and M5.

The independent claims have been amended to more clearly define the present invention over the cited prior art references in terms of the first and second output circuits. In particular, independent Claim 14 has been amended to include the subject matter from dependent Claims 15 and 16. Likewise, independent Claim 21 has been amended to include the subject matter from dependent Claims 25 and 26. Independent method Claim 31 has been amended to include the subject matter from dependent Claim 32 along with the structure of the first and second output circuits as recited in dependent Claims 14 and 15. The dependency of certain claims has been amended for consistency.

The claim amendments and the arguments supporting patentability of the claims are provided below.

I. The Amended Claims

The present invention, as recited in amended independent Claim 14, for example, is directed to an image sensor comprising an array of pixels, with each pixel comprising a photodiode, and a first output circuit for deriving a linear

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output signal by applying a reset signal to the photodiode and reading a voltage on the photodiode after an integration time. The first output circuit comprises a reset switch for applying a reset voltage to the photodiode. The reset switch comprises a reset transistor including a conducting terminal connected to the photodiode. A readout switch turns on the conducting terminal of the reset transistor after expiration of the integration time. A second output circuit derives a logarithmic output signal by reading a near instantaneous illumination-dependent voltage on the photodiode that is a logarithmic function of the illumination. The second output circuit comprises an amplifier, and a log select switch for connecting the amplifier to the photodiode. The first and second output circuits sequentially provide the linear and logarithmic output. An output selection circuit is coupled to the array of pixels for selecting between the linear output signal and the logarithmic output signal as an output signal.

Independent Claim 21 is directed to an image sensor, and has been amended similar to independent Claim 14.

Independent Claim 31 is directed to a method for operating an image sensor, and has been amended similar to independent Claim 14.

II. The Claims Are Patentable

The Examiner rejected independent Claims 14, 21 and 31 over the Morris et al. patent. The Examiner referenced FIGS. 3 and 4 in Morris et al. as disclosing an image sensor **140**

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comprising an array of pixels **119**, with each pixel comprising a photodiode **152**. The Examiner referenced column 5, lines 34-35 as disclosing the image sensor operating in the logarithmic mode, and column 6, line 13 as disclosing the image sensor operating in the linear mode. A multiplexing circuit **127** is configured as an output selection circuit for selecting between the linear mode and the logarithmic mode (column 6, lines 8-15).

The independent claims were amended to include specific structure for the first and second output circuits. For the first output circuit, the Examiner broadly characterizes reference elements **124** and **129** in FIG. 3 as the reset switch and the readout switch. In particular, the Examiner characterized transistor **150** as the reset transistor including a conducting terminal connected to the photodiode **152**. For the second output circuit, the Examiner characterizes reference elements **156** and **160** in FIG. 4 as the amplifier and the logic select switch.

The Applicants submit that Morris et al. fails to disclose the specifics of the second output switch as recited in amended independent Claim 14. In Morris et al., the Examiner characterized reference elements **156** and **160** in FIG. 4 as the amplifier and the logic select switch for the second output switch. However, the amplifier is illustrated by reference element **156** but reference element **160** simply corresponds to a node between the photodiode **152** and the reset transistor **150**. In sharp contrast, amended independent claim 14 recites that a log select switch connects the amplifier to the photodiode.

Accordingly, it is submitted that amended independent

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Claim 14 is patentable over the Morris et al. patent. Amended independent Claims 21 and 31 are similar to amended independent Claim 14. Therefore, it is submitted that these claims are also patentable over the Morris et al. patent.

In view of the patentability of amended independent Claims 14, 21 and 31, it is submitted that the dependent claims, which include yet further distinguishing features of the invention are also patentable. These dependent claims need no further discussion herein.

III. CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments to the claims and the arguments provided herein, it is submitted that all the claims are patentable. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance is requested in due course. Should any minor informalities need to be addressed, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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